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Your Taxes: Past, present and potential future

By Sean Hart
Blue Mountain Eagle

Proposals under consideration by the Oregon Legislature could substantially increase property taxes.

Although no concrete plan has emerged, the League of Oregon Cities has advocated reworking the tax limits and structure approved by voters in the 1990s. These limits and how they are implemented have essentially defined Oregon property taxes for the last 20 years.

Although Grant County Assessor David Thunell said many assessors believe Oregon has the most complicated property tax system in the nation, understanding the two key measures that established the current system provides a basic overview.

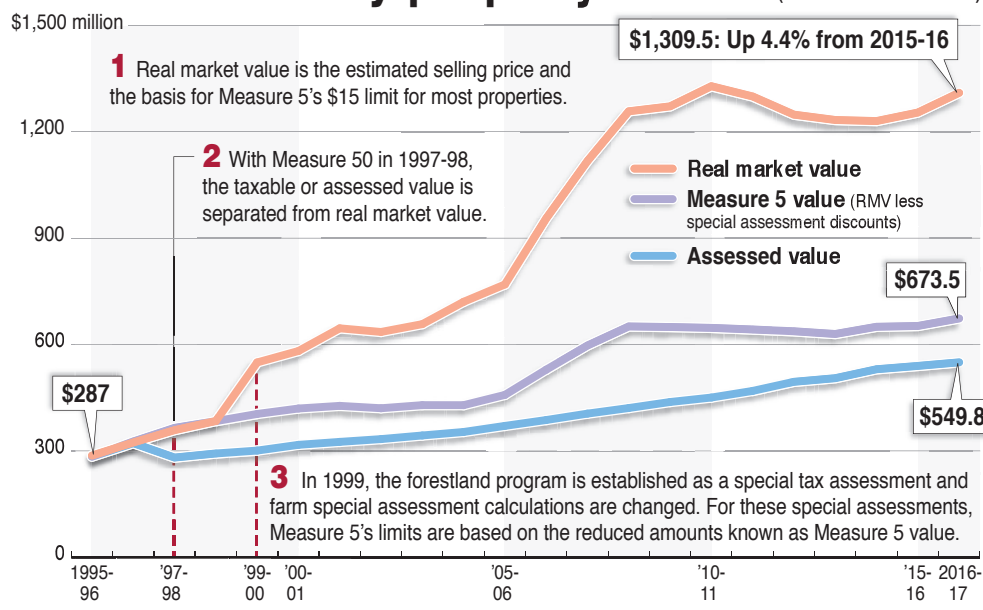
EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second entry in the Eagle's 2017 "Your Taxes" series, in which we will examine all 27 taxing districts in Grant County so you know where your property taxes are going.

The old levy system

Before voters approved Measure 5 and Measure 50 in the '90s, Oregon's property taxes were based on a levy system. Budget committees for the taxing districts — such as cities, school districts and counties — would determine the total amount of funding needed, and this total was divided up proportionately among the properties in the district based on their real market value.

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Grant County property values (Millions of dollars)



Sources: Grant County Assessor's Office; Oregon Dept. of Revenue
Sean Hart and Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group

Cities push reforms to increase property tax revenues

By Claire Withycombe
Capital Bureau

As legislators set to work on balancing the state's budget, some lawmakers and lobbyists are considering property tax reform to benefit local government budgets.

In particular, supporters want to change how property

taxes are calculated, and remove limits on tax rates.

Two ballot measures approved by voters in the 1990s, Measure 5 and Measure 50, limited the amount of property taxes Oregonians pay, and annual tax increases.

Measure 5, passed in 1990, limited the total tax rates levied by all local taxing bodies

to no more than \$15 per \$1,000 of real market property value — up to \$5 for education, and \$10 for other local taxing bodies.

Measure 50, passed in 1997, decoupled a property's assessed valuation, the amount on which it is taxed, from real market value, according to

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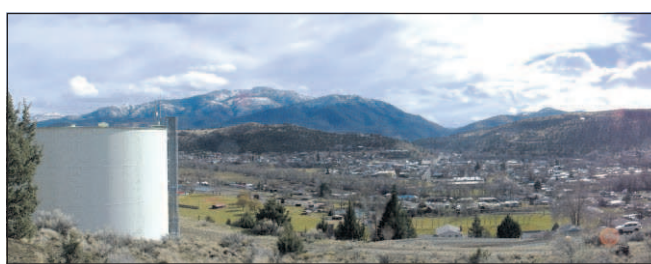
City manager proposes economic development plan

By Rylan Boggs
Blue Mountain Eagle

John Day City Manager Nick Green is ready to take on John Day's failing infrastructure, population decline and unemployment rate.

To address these problems, Green is proposing a three-pronged approach. He wants to make John Day a more desirable place to live, adjust city spending to support improvement projects and find investors and partners to help the city grow.

"If we can regain the population we've lost over the last 30 years by differentiating our city to achieve a more competitive position, our businesses will become more profitable, new jobs will be created and



A water tank above John Day.

public services will become more efficient," Green said. "More importantly, making investments in our economy will improve the quality of life for all John Day residents."



Nick Green

Grant County has the highest unemployment rate in the state at 7.2 percent, according to the Oregon Employment Department, and the second-lowest median household income in Oregon at \$32,614 per household, according to Green.

He wants to attract young working families, active retirees and digital commuters to

create a more diverse and resilient local economy, which will promote growth in institutions like schools and hospitals.

Young working families will help bring fresh ideas into the community, boost school enrollment and contribute to the local economy, he said, and attracting active retirees with disposable income would boost the local economy.

Digital commuters often have a choice where they live, he said, and John Day's outdoor opportunities could be an excellent incentive to attract them. However, the city needs better broadband connectivity first.

Green said the city has the

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Man who killed John Day cop will be freed

By Sean Hart
Blue Mountain Eagle

The man who pleaded guilty to killing a John Day police officer in 1992 will soon be freed.

The Oregon Supreme Court Feb. 16 denied a request to review an appeals court decision that reinstated Sidney Dean Porter's 2013 prison release date due to legal errors that year by the Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision.



Sidney Dean Porter

Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter said the board will now begin putting together a release plan for Porter, who killed Officer Frank Ward April 8, 1992.

"After all the hard work that my staff and I put in to ensure that Porter would remain incarcerated, the decision of the Supreme Court is disappointing, but not unexpected," Carpenter said.

Porter had pleaded guilty to aggravated murder. According to the appeals court opinion, Porter attacked Ward, who had responded to a report of domestic violence at Porter's residence. Porter "bludgeoned Ward with his fists and a 10-pound piece of firewood," according to the opinion, and the autopsy revealed a skull fracture and contusions in Ward's brain.

After Carpenter's testimony before the parole board in 2015, the board ruled Porter was a danger to the community and ordered him to remain in custody until at least 2020. In September 2016, however, the Oregon Court of Appeals overturned the parole board's decision to postpone Porter's 2013 prison release date, stating the board lacked authority to rescind a release date "absent a timely hearing," according to the court opinion.

"A defining principle of our legal system is that both sides have the opportunity to be heard before decisions are made which affect them," Carpenter said. "The Court of Appeals found that Porter was not given such an opportunity, and the Supreme Court apparently agrees."

The appeals court ruled the parole board should not have postponed the 2013 release date without a timely hearing. Carpenter, who was elected in 2014, said a June 2013 release date was issued after a former district attorney failed to present evidence at an exit interview earlier that year.

Although more evidence was provided after that interview, the parole board did not hold a hearing with Porter until September 2013, after postponing the June release date. The appeals court ruled evidence presented after the postponement of the release date could not be used to justify the postponement that already occurred.